

# Globalization and Challenges in Library Management in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: An Appraisal of the University Library Systems in India and the USA

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*Abstract :* With the advent of the internet the impact of globalization has been felt in all spheres and more so in library systems. However, this has been offset by emerging challenges and issues unique to the global inequalities and socio-economic structure of the country. This article deals with the pro's and con's of globalization and the challenges it has thrown up in library management systems in University environments particularly germane to India and the USA. Certain challenges faced in library management strategies have been highlighted and have been dealt with under the broad areas of (a) upgrading the capabilities of libraries in tune with changing economic climate (b) developing strategies to achieve maximum output and outreach (c) reform library management education (d) involve library management personnel in University education systems (e) introduction of safety checks using an honor code system within the ambit of library management. An account of the state of the University libraries in both countries and problems associated with global inequalities has also been dealt with in the above context.

*Key Words:* Library Management, Globalization, Universities, Honor code system

## Introduction

In the present world, knowledge dominates the society in all spheres of activity as well as in everyday lives. Thus, a knowledge-driven economy has been defined as the rapid development and convergence of communications, computing and digital content to enable the globalization of production and stimulating enterprise and creativity. In the context of Libraries as repositories of knowledge: "*Libraries of all sizes and types are embracing digital collections, although most libraries will continue to offer both print and digital collections for many years to come*" (Tenopir, 2003). In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, it is not just knowledge, but more importantly the effective use and exploitation of all types of knowledge to fulfill the business and economic activities of developing economies that is crucial. In the educational sector, the library management and services have increasingly applied and utilized the electronic information resources to complement the conventional materials. Librarians have played key roles in the collecting, storing, organizing and disseminating of knowledge to society. Although the advent of Internet has brought predictions of the demise of the traditional role of libraries, it has proven that libraries are, not only crucial but the librarians' role as knowledge providers has become even more significant. In universities, for example the head librarians continue to become an important partner in decision-makings while administrators, professors and students see the library as the nerve-center of the campus. Libraries have indeed changed radically from their custodian role and emerged as dynamic partners in knowledge management programs.

The Librarians' growing interest in knowledge management has led to a number of issues regarding the difference between "information" and "knowledge", and between "information management" and "knowledge management". As such, Library and information professionals have shown a great interest in knowledge management (KM) as it is regarded to have considerable similarity on the concept of coding, storing and transmitting knowledge, a the primary focus of libraries (Townley, 2001). For many, KM is perceived as a re-branding of librarianship or information management. KM is not regarded as a new phenomenon as librarians have always operated as intermediaries between people who have knowledge and those who need to know. Bender's (1999), reiterated that knowledge-dependent organizations would be wise to integrate their own libraries into their knowledge management program. Davenport et al (1998) categorized KM into four broad types of perspectives, namely (a) to create knowledge repositories, (b) improve knowledge access and transfer, (c) enhance the knowledge environment and manage knowledge as an asset and (d) to recognize the value of knowledge to an organization.

#### Upgrading capabilities of libraries

In both India and the US, with the rapid development of information and communication technologies (ICTs) have created the knowledge society, which will impact upon developing economies (India) as well as on developed nations (USA). As such, Librarians in both these nations have an important role to play in overcoming the digital divide, and making reference and sharing global knowledge. Information and knowledge are expanding in quantity and accessibility. In many fields future decision-makers will be presented with unprecedented new tools for development. In such fields as agriculture, health, education, human resources and environmental management, or transport and business development, the consequences could be revolutionary. Communication and information technology has enormous potential, especially for developing countries such as India and in furthering sustainable development. In terms of collection development, libraries have begun to reduce the traditional materials and have instead increased the purchase of network services and digital resources (Bertrot et al., 2004).

Network-based services and resources offered by libraries today, including digital references, digital collections, online databases, e-journals, and e-books, enable libraries to operate anywhere, allowing patrons with internet access to access content, services, and resources any time (Bertrot et al., 2004). Librarians and information personnel (IPs) need to



Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University

realign their service in line with the knowledge demand of the users in the workplace. Users require repackaged or analyzed information that is needed for productive use. KM is recognized as a key factor in organizational success in both profit and not-for-profit organizations. It would be interesting to see the potential benefits in its application within libraries, and their relationship with

the parent organizations and with the communities they serve. Librarians and IPs are trained to be experts in information searching, selecting, acquiring, organizing, preserving, repackaging, disseminating, and serving. However, professionals in information technology and systems have also regarded information management as their domain because of the recent advances in ICT and systems. The freely accessible information on the web, in conjunction with the escalating costs of library materials, threatens the traditional mission of libraries to create and sustain large, self-sufficient collections for their patrons (Troll, 2002). Libraries need to reposition or enhance themselves to act as KM centres for small businesses, providing both KM and competitive intelligence (CI) services. An increasing number of corporate and University libraries in the US are managing their knowledge by archiving information in document form, maintaining databases and data warehouses of corporate knowledge, and mapping human knowledge within the organization. Recording the tacit knowledge and converting it into explicit knowledge becomes a new challenge for librarians involved with KM. While in the Universities in the US, the advancement of library management practices have kept pace with the explosion of knowledge with advent of the internet, this has not happened to a similar extent in the Indian Universities. Some of the privileged Universities / Institutions of Higher learning who function directly under the University Grants Commission or the Department of Science and Technology have benefited, whereas the rest have sadly languished. It is not that internet access has not reached these Universities, it is just that they have not upgraded their Library Management Systems to keep pace with the times.

Developing strategies to achieve maximum output and outreach

As a learning organization, libraries should provide a strong leadership in KM which involves both managing tacit and explicit knowledge. The library's challenge in managing and digitizing the knowledge can be undertaken by providing a repository of all of those



Always open policy of MSU library

knowledge resources, both internal and external. The Libraries' new role as a learning and knowledge centre as well as the knowledge commons for their specific users is a reality. It is a centre for learning and intellectual discourse and facilitates knowledge creation. Unlike those business organizations whose goal for knowledge management is for competitive advantage, most public, academic, and institutions of higher learning have a different agenda: to disseminate knowledge and make it available for the end users. To achieve this, the strategy should be to effectively reach out to the clientele and use all manner of technologies to achieve this goal. A library cannot be treated as a centre that is open 9 to 5, it should be accessible at all hours



Mobile website at MSU

and this is precisely what occurs in Universities in the US. Libraries are open practically 24 h a day! In the Indian Universities on the other hand, librarianship is still looked upon as a 9-5 job and the library shuts down when the 8 hr work schedule is done. Another important method which has been adopted by Universities in the US is to have mobile compliant library access. Thus, for the tech-savvy students, this is an easy manner of accessing the library.

#### Reform library management education

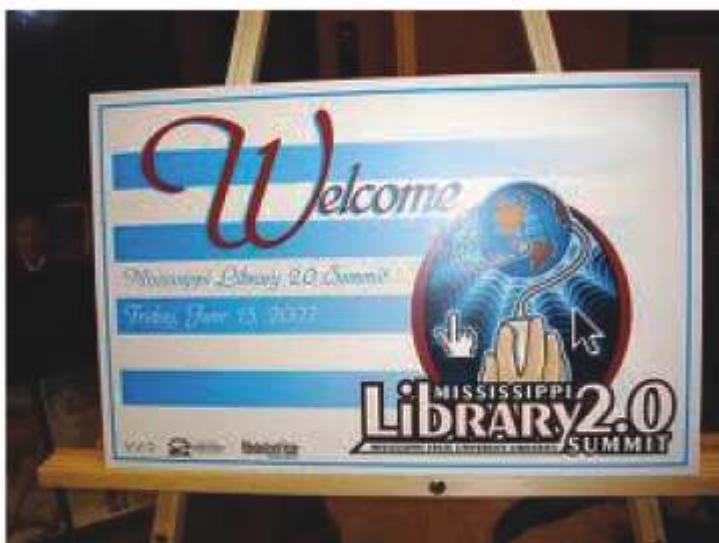
All University libraries both in the US and in India can participate in enhancing their knowledge management functions in some critical areas and services, such as, knowledge resources management; resources sharing and networking; information technology development; user services; and human resources management (tacit knowledge). Librarians need to move forward in line with the new shifts toward knowledge

management, if they do not want to become obsolete. Knowledge management helps libraries to survive in their competitions. Librarians can contribute in their traditional ways, such as by providing access, working in partnership, structuring knowledge, imparting skills, preserving heritage, and inspiring trust. With changing times, the library management education too should change and only this would empower libraries to serve as nodal

centers of information and knowledge.

#### Library management personnel in University education

The trend of involving library management personnel in the University education system is catching on and is prevalent in the US Universities. A librarian or a library personnel is no longer separate from the educational system, rather they are now an integral part of the system. A good library manager, via people-centered management, leads the



The Library 2.0 summit at MSU, introducing and working on new library management systems.



direction of the organization, identifies new projects and creates new teams, task-forces, and committees to work on these projects, introduces new technologies, programs, and services, and directs applications for grants. Thus, librarians and library personnel are part of the educational system of the Universities rather than being isolated and functioning on their own. Unfortunately, the Indian University system has yet to adopt this culture of active involvement of library personnel in their educational endeavor.



Workshops and seminars by library personnel at MSU

Perhaps, workshops such as this one would be a step in the right direction.

#### Introduction of the honor code system by Libraries in University education

With the advent of the Internet and the consequent globalization, plagiarism has become a rampant issue both among the academics and the students. The problem has become so pernicious in University environments that a recent article in the journal *Nature* (vol. 481, January 2012, Page 21) featured how it has affected academia and what can be done to stop it. In our opinion, introduction of an Honor code system by Libraries (as being adopted by most US Universities) would be the first step in combating this bane of plagiarism.

#### Conclusion

In conclusion, libraries in academic setting in both the US and in India have had a long and rich experience in the management of information. For any library to succeed in implementing knowledge management, it will require a strong leadership and vision from the top administration, which can influence the University's knowledge sharing efforts in a positive way. Hence, librarians should work together with ICT professionals and others in the Universities to develop the appropriate knowledge management systems.

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